



Making Decisions About Sex

How do you make the right decision about when and with whom you should have sex?

by Lisa Brock

Sex is a basic human need. Every person has the desire to enjoy a physical relationship with someone they care about. And in the context of marriage, those moments of intimacy can bring pure joy and pleasure to your life.

But when it's used in the wrong way, sex can cause guilt, anxiety, depression, disease and low self-esteem.

How do you make the right decision about when — and with whom — you should have sex?

- **Make a commitment.** If you've made a wise decision about what's best for your life, you won't be as likely to give in to your desires. Make a promise to yourself that you won't engage in sexual activity until you're married. The best way to make sure you stick to your word is to share your promise with a pastor or parent. A tangible reminder, such as a ring or necklace, may also help you to remember your commitment. Plus, jewelry can be a great way to bring the topic up with your boyfriend or girlfriend: it's best if the person you're dating knows exactly where you stand so he or she can support you in your decision. (And if he/she doesn't, that's a good indication you haven't found "right one.")
- **Keep your brain in control.** Even though your body may send other messages, remember having sex even one time can negatively affect your life forever. The only 100% "safe sex" is no sex at all. Though some forms of birth control may protect you from sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and pregnancy, they're not without failure. And there's no such thing as a condom for your heart. The best way to enjoy a sexual relationship is inside marriage, where you know the person you're intimate with is healthy and where a pregnancy would mean a baby born with two loving parents.
- **Keep yourself out of irresistible situations.** Be prepared to say "no," but stay out of settings that might require it. If you're involved in a close relationship, avoid situations where sex will be a temptation. Even if your companion is just a friend, if it's someone of the opposite sex, protect yourself from doing something you'll regret. Spend time together in public, and in groups. Keep other friends around to hold you accountable. That way you'll know that even if you have a moment of weakness, you won't have sex.
- **Have a plan.** Even the most careful couples find themselves in compromising circumstances. When things start to get hot and heavy, know where and how to put on the brakes. Plan what you will say and do to keep your commitment to purity. Say something like, "I really do care about you, but I don't want to have sex until I'm married." Be as clear and as firm as possible. Then leave the situation quickly.
- **It's never too late to start over.** Even if you've had sex before, you can still set new, better boundaries to get your sex life on the right track. Let your significant other know that you care too much about yourself and him or her to let sex undermine the future of your relationship. Focus on other ways of getting to know each other, such as common interests or new pastimes you can share. Your relationship will be deeper and more meaningful because you'll know each other's hearts. There will be plenty of time after the wedding to get to know one another's bodies.

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